

Dark Night of the Soul

By St. John of the Cross

Translated by A.Z. Foreman

Once in the dark of night,
Inflamed with love and yearning, I arose
And went, as no one knows,
When all my house lay long in deep repose

All in the dark went right,
Down secret steps, disguised in other clothes,
In dark when no one knows,
When all my house lay long in deep repose.

And in the luck of night
In secret places where no other spied
I went without my sight
Without a light to guide
Except the heart that lit me from inside.

It guided me and shone
Surer than noonday sunlight over me,
And led me to the one
Whom only I could see
Deep in a place where only we could be.

O guiding dark of night!
O dark of night more darling than the dawn!
O night that can unite
A lover and loved one,
Lover and loved one moved in unison.

And on my flowering breast
Which I had kept for him and him alone
He slept as I caressed
And loved him for my own,
Breathing an air from redolent cedars blown.

And from the castle wall
The wind came down to winnow through his hair
Bidding his fingers fall,
Searing my throat with air
And all my senses were suspended there.

I stayed there to forget.
There on my lover, face to face, I lay.
All ended, and I let my cares all fall away
Forgotten in the lilies on that day.